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THE IMPORTANT CHOICE.

“ See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.”—DEUT. xxx. 15.

SUPPOSE, reader, that some question connected with your dearest interests were now under discussion; suppose that you were in an assize hall, and immediately about to pass a trial that would issue in your life or death, with what agitated feelings would you contemplate a result so joyous or so tremendous! You would not trifle with such an inquiry, nor enjoy an easy moment till it were decided. An inquiry far more important than this now claims your attention; and connected with results as much more precious than life, as much more appalling than death, as eternity is longer than time, and everlasting bliss or woe more momentous than the pleasures or sorrows of an hour. If, in the case supposed, you were a spectator only, still what delight or distress would agitate your breast, as the train of evidence tended to acquit or condemn him whose life, whose all might be at stake. But here you are personally interested; the subject concerns yourself. The matter of inquiry is, Are you blessed by the possession of heartfelt religion, or accursed through want of that one thing needful? Are you saved in Christ, or undone and perishing through neglecting him? Are you an heir of endless life, or of eternal death? O trifle not with inquiries of such immense and everlasting importance.

We are placed here with eternity before us, and here it is to be decided whose we must be, and where we must be for ever. In a few years, at the utmost, you must be an inhabitant of an unseen and endless world. Eternal ages await you when your time shall be no longer; but the flight of eternal ages will bring no period like the present. Through that immense duration no season will arise in which it may be said, “ Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation.” Your time once gone will come no

more. Mark the dial that declares the noiseless flight of time.

The shadow once at Joshua's order stay'd,
And once went back when Hezekiah pray'd;
Mortal, howe'er you grieve, howe'er deplore,
The flying shadow will return no more.

As the shadow moves imperceptibly over the dial, till it has numbered the last hour of day, and day gives place to night, so silently and certainly are your days and years departing. Ere long the last will be ended, and what you are found then you will continue to be for ever.

There is no after change when once the sun of life has set, and its brief day has closed. You cannot become the disciple of the Saviour in the eternal world. There never will the question be proposed to you, "Undone immortal, will you be his disciple? will you welcome the Divine Saviour as your Redeemer and your Lord?" No, my brother or my sister, never will you hear such invitations there. Eternity will present to your view numberless unimagined scenes, but never one display of pardoning love. Sounds yet unthought of will strike upon your ear, but never will you hear the tidings of redeeming grace proclaiming salvation to the lost. No tears of penitence ever wet the cheek that is pallid in the grave. No proclamation of pardon is ever made in heaven. There it is not needed. No messages of mercy are ever heard in hell; they do not reach so far. O let these solemn considerations strike deep upon your heart, and urge you to "seek the Lord while he may be found."

Take a view of the state of mankind, and consider that all are either the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, or his enemies and the subjects of the wicked one.

In this favoured land, as far as the spiritual state of its inhabitants is concerned, there are in reality but two classes of persons,—the humble and devoted disciples of the Holy Saviour, and those who neglect his great salvation. To the former class belong all of every name and party whose trust is in Christ; whose hearts are consecrated to him; whose lives are governed by his laws; whose affections are placed upon his kingdom; whose guide is the Bible, and whose home is sought in heaven. All these, however they may differ on some points, and err on others, constitute the family of God. To the other class belong persons of every description, who are not decidedly pious.

Profligates and infidels, those who make light of the gospel, even the merely moral and lifeless professors in the church of Christ, compose the family, and are all under the dominion of the wicked one. This is the uniform testimony of God's infallible word. That blessed book declares that mankind are divided into the friends and the foes of Christ; the righteous and the unrighteous; believers and unbelievers; those who have everlasting life, and those on whom the wrath of God abides; those who are saved by the gospel, and those who are lost, and to whom the gospel is hid, Matt. xii. 30 : xiii. 29, 30, etc.; John iii. 18, 36; Mark xvi. 16; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16; iv. 3, 4. Among the pious, some are more holy, and among the wicked some are worse than others: yet all are either the subjects of Christ, or the slaves of Satan: the children of God, or the children of the devil, Eph. ii. 3, 4; 1 John iii. 10, etc.

The all-compassionate Saviour describes but two ways through the world, Matt. vii. 13, 14. He directs those who wish for happiness to pursue the narrow and unfrequented path to heaven, but represents the greater part of mankind as crowding the "broad way that leadeth to destruction," and thus as lying under the dominion of the wicked one, 1 John v. 19.

Satan, in consequence of his extensive sway, is denominated "the god of this world," 2 Cor. iv. 4. He works in "the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2, who serve him in different ways.

Some do his will in lives of open profligacy. Behold the haunts of dissipation, drunkenness, lewdness, gaming, and vicious pleasures of every description. In the pursuit of these many serve Satan, and with him will perish for ever. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19-21.

Take another view : observe many seeking wealth by dishonest gain. This class includes not only the sharper and the thief, but those who defraud others by light weights and short measures, and who depart from the sacred rules of justice and honesty. Look again, and you see crowds that indulge in profaneness or falsehood, whose souls are polluted by swearing, or blackened by lying. All these are led captive by the devil at his will. "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord." "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." "All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," Prov. xi. 1 ; Exod. xx. 7 ; Rev. xxi. 8.

Others that habitually pursue none of these courses, are yet perishing in sin. Multitudes, that no man can number, lead lives of trifling and carelessness. They bear the Christian name, but are utter strangers to the spirit and blessings of religion. The solemn truths of the gospel have not impressed their minds. The terrors or the love of Christ have produced no effect upon their hearts. Thoughtless of their eternal interests, they live as intent on the trifles of time as a butterfly roving from flower to flower. And could they die like the poor insect, and then be no more, happy would be their condition compared with what it is ; but thus they cannot die. These crowds of triflers must, ere long, discover, by dreadful experience, that a life of trifling is a life of sin ; and that he who neglects the gospel, as well as he that blasphemes its Author, is an enemy to God, and a servant to Satan.

Others profess respect for religion, and perhaps attend an evangelical ministry, but yet neglect the great salvation. The Lord Jesus represents this neglect as the source of destruction to multitudes, Matt. xxii. 3, 5 ; Luke xiv. 18. Observe a child listening with apparent attention to the directions of an affectionate parent, then see the child go away and slight all his father said. This is a picture of multitudes that trifle with heartfelt piety. They hear of the Saviour and his claims, of death, of judgment, of heaven, and hell. They listen to all, and then treat all with as much indifference as would the lifeless tenants of the grave. Year after year let the inquiry be proposed to them, Is your heart yet given to the Saviour ? and the answer must be, No. Do you renounce the world for him ? No. Are you seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteous-

ness? No. Are you living as a dying creature with eternity before you? No. Do you acknowledge the Saviour's claims upon you? No: I hear of them, and with my lips acknowledge them, but the whole course of my life shows that I make light of them. Reader, are you one of these perishing immortals? Such a life is as pleasing to Satan as the life of a profligate sinner; and the unhappy creature that pursues this course, however youthful, or gay, or cheerful, or amiable, or prosperous, is as truly in subjection to the wicked one as infidels and atheists; for such a life as certainly accomplishes the purposes of that infernal foe. It, as surely as even a more wicked life, undoes the deathless soul; it as really rejects Christ, and all the blessings of his love; it as effectually keeps the soul from heaven, and sinks it in perdition. The children of ungodliness and wrath pass through this world in many different ways, but all tend to the same point; all meet in one at last, and all conduct the hapless traveller to the regions of eternal death.

Many serve the wicked one under a worthless and delusive profession of religion. The Lord Jesus describes such characters. He compares them to foolish virgins who take their lamps, but take no oil with them, Matt. xxv. 1, etc. Thus these assume a lifeless form of godliness, and keep it till death removes the delusion, and they feel themselves eternally undone. He speaks of those without the wedding garment, who gain a place in his church, while destitute of an interest in himself, and of the character his disciples possess, Matt. xxii. 11. He describes the stony ground hearers, who receive the word with a transient joy, but have no root, and so fall away, Matt. xiii. 20. He tells of multitudes that call him Lord! Lord! to whom he will say at last, "I never knew you," Matt. vii. 23. Many put some excitement of the passions in the place of the new heart, and the resigned and obedient will produced in true conversion to God. And though these essentials of religion are absent, they yet deem themselves converted. Barren zeal for some religious peculiarities in doctrine or practice forms the chief part of the religion of others. But to be zealous for any particular mode of professing religion, or to indulge agitation and almost uproar in what are professedly religious exercises, is very much easier than to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is to be feared that many

have professed zeal for the doctrines of grace, who lived and died strangers to grace. Others have expressed love to Protestantism, and hatred to the yoke of Rome, who yet were under the more galling yoke of sin and Satan. Some have manifested much excitement and seeming fervour in prayer, who never in reality prayed ; and many have joined the church on earth, who never were united to Christ, and never will join the church in heaven.

All these various characters belong to the kingdom of the enemy of God and man. They all in different ways obey him ; in fact, all serve him but those happy persons who are in sincerity devoted to the Lord.

These are they who form the one other class of mankind. They are the disciples of the Saviour. They receive and regard him as their Redeemer and their Lord. Though too often divided by prejudices and imperfection, there is among them all one heart and one soul. Their religion is evidenced not merely or chiefly by the excitement of the passions, or by ineffective knowledge, by barren zeal or lifeless forms, but by a life in which the Lord Jesus Christ is trusted as the sinner's righteousness and hope ; is loved as the believer's advocate and shepherd, and honoured and obeyed as his rightful sovereign and gracious owner. A life in which God is loved as the supreme happiness of the soul, in which heaven is daily sought as its eternal home,—a life in which faith, and love, and hope, and prayer, and the enjoyment of the Spirit's influence unite to produce the Saviour's likeness in the character ; and in which growing holiness and unfeigned submission to the Divine will, mark the progress of one who is travelling to the skies. Reader, is such your life ? While nominally a Christian, are you a Christian in reality ? Such in truth is the Christian character. Doubt you this assertion ? If so, examine a few of the statements which God's holy word supplies.

The Christian is one who has mourned for sin, who abhors himself, and with a contrite heart seeks salvation, and who is justified through faith in the Redeemer, Luke xiii. Matt. v. 3—6 ; Isa. lvii. 15 ; lxvi. 2 ; Psal. li. 17 ; Luke xviii. 14 ; Rom. iii. 19, etc. ; v. 1, etc.

The Christian comes out from the world, and comes to Christ : discerns his excellences, and counts all things loss for his sake, Matt. xi. 28 ; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18 ; John vi. 37, etc. ; 1 Pet. ii. 24 ; Phil. iii. 7. He loves the Saviour, and

prefers him to life itself, 1 Pet. ii. 7; Eph. vi. 24; John xxi. 17; Acts xx. 24; xxi. 13. He takes up his cross and sacrifices, in estimation, in affection, and, when required actually to leave all, in practice, all things for Christ, Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33. He obeys his Lord, and proves his faith by the fruits of holiness, 1 John ii. 3; iii. 10; Matt. xi. 29; vii. 21—29; John xiv. 23; xv. 10, 14; 1 Pet. ii. 21.

The Christian sets his affection on things above, seeks his home in heaven, and looks for his Redeemer's coming, Matt. vi. 19; Col. iii. 1, 2; 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 1, etc.; Phil. iii. 18, etc.; 1 Thess. i. 10

The Christian perseveringly pursues this course, and whatever attainments he may make in the Divine life, still aims at higher, and feels that he is, at best, an unprofitable servant, Heb. x. 39; Phil. iii. 12—14; Luke xvii. 10.

To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus is to be thus devoted to him, and through his grace to become a partaker of such dispositions and such a character.

While mankind are thus divided into the friends and the foes of the Lord Jesus, consider that he most graciously invites you to become a member of his happy family, and a partaker of his salvation.

The Divine Saviour invites all that unfeignedly desire to partake of his heavenly grace to rest and happiness. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light," Matt. xi. 28—30. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day," John vi. 37—40. These invitations are addressed to you. Consider by whom they are uttered. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and contemplate the Son of God as he now appears above. He has "obtained eternal redemption for us;" he has "made reconciliation for iniquity," he has borne our sins

and carried our sorrows; he has been wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, Heb. ix. 12; 2 Cor. v. 18; Isa. liii. 5. Thus he has opened a passage to heaven. The purport of his addresses is, "Dying child of man, eternity is before you. Guilt lies heavily upon your soul, and everlasting ruin awaits you; but I came to seek and to save the lost. I can remove your guilt, and protect you from impending wrath. I can preserve you from the place of endless burnings and despair, and can enrich you with eternal life. Undone immortal, come unto me and be happy." "I love them that love me, and those who seek me early shall find me." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come ye, whose sins, like mountains, are sinking your souls to destruction. Come, ye drunkards, ye swearers, ye lewd, ye dishonest, ye false, forsake your ways, and come to me. Come, ye lost, ye guilty, ye dying, ye all but damned, come unto me, and I will take all your aggravated guilt away. Come, ye wicked triflers with God, with mercy, and your own souls. Come, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. What though you have been the slaves of sin, the children of folly, and the heirs of wrath! I still have mercy in reserve for you. You have had mercies, and abused them; invitations, and slighted them; time, and wasted its precious hours; you have been called, but refused; have been wooed to receive salvation, but have slighted every kind entreaty,—yet come! Come, ye delayers, ye abusers of mercy, ye rebellious, ye miserable, come, and I will in no wise cast you out. You have shut your hearts long against my claims. You have served Satan with willing minds through many guilty years. You have heaped up wrath against the day of wrath. Yet even now come, and I will forgive your wicked backwardness, and long continued guilt: and will turn away all my wrath. Much of your day of mercy is past; you have but little time left. Heaven or hell must ere long receive you; yet come, and I will have mercy upon you. I will not cast you out. You deserve to be cast out by me; yet come, and not for your follies, for your crimes, for your mispent youth, for your wasted years, for your long rebellion, and your black ingratitude; not for any of these, not for all of them together, will I refuse you my mercy; for him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Come therefore, and I will not refuse

to welcome you ; but will bestow all you need. Do you cry, God be merciful to me a sinner ? Your sins, which are many, shall be forgiven. Do you flee to me from the dangers of hell ? I will deliver you from going down to the pit. Do you seek refuge in me from Satan's tyranny ? I will make you free, and you shall be free indeed. Do you apply to me for strength and grace ? My grace shall be sufficient for you. Is it my guardian care you need ? " I am the Good Shepherd, —my sheep shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," John x. 14, 28. Is eternal life the good you crave ? " Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life," John vi. 47, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Is heaven the home you seek ? " follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be," John xii. 26.

Now inquire, what regard you have paid to the Saviour's invitations.

The message of the Lord Jesus to you in the gospel is in purport what has been just represented. What think you of such mercy ? Have you come to this Lord of life and glory, and become his disciple ? If so, all the good displayed in the gospel is already yours. On the other hand, if you are not his disciple, you possess no real blessing, but are exposed to every evil, and to utter ruin. Let conscience therefore speak ! It will speak ere long. Be faithful, and suffer no delusion to deceive you. The Judge eternal will not be deceived. Conscience, do thy duty !

Is the reader one of Christ's disciples ? The inquiry is not, Are you a churchman or a dissenter ? Are you professedly a Christian, and not a heathen ? Are you moral or profligate ? Are you an infidel, or the enemy of infidelity ? but it is, Are you a devoted disciple and a faithful follower of the adorable King of Glory ? Are you a possessor of the blessings of the Saviour's love ? or are you one of those poor guilty neglecters of that Saviour, to whom it would have been good never to have been born ? The time approaches apace when this question must be decided ; but when that awful moment comes, it will be too late to reap any benefit from the conviction that the soul has not been committed to the Saviour's care. It will then be too late to repent ; too late to pray ; too late in agonies of alarm to cry, Lord, Lord, open to me ! Blessed be God, it is not yet too late. O reader, what are you ?

Does conscience charge you with neglecting the Saviour? Is this the conviction of your mind, "I am not one of Christ's disciples? Whatever I am, I am not his devoted follower, I have been a cumberer of the ground. A glorious immortality has invited my attention, but I have slighted all its glories. A blissful heaven has been proffered as my inheritance, but I have disregarded all its blessings. A Saviour full of love has claimed my affections, but I have closed my heart against him. A whole eternity of joy or misery has been unveiled to me as my future portion, but I have treated it with careless indifference. Yet I may still find mercy. The great, the impassable gulf, is not yet between me and happiness."

Will you now receive the gracious Saviour? If you have hitherto slighted his dying love and his ten thousand claims, are you willing now to consecrate yourself to this Divine Benefactor!

Glance at some of the motives that should prompt undone sinners to yield themselves to the Divine Saviour.

As you have been reminded, every human being is passing through life either as a favoured disciple of the Lord Jesus, or as a wretched slave of Satan. These are not figurative lords, but real sovereigns of mankind. What therefore will you be? Whose will you be here, and whose for ever? The eternal Jehovah claims your affections; shall he have them? He is infinitely holy, and wise, and good, and just. He is the Father of heaven and earth; the God whom angelic hosts love with supreme affection, and whose will they delightedly perform. He gave you life and always supports you. His mercies have crowned you. His power has upheld you. His bounty has fed you. His forbearance has borne with your ingratitude and sin. He is the God that sees you, that pities you, that can bless you, or that will condemn you. To the penitent his mercy is as great as the heavens are high above the earth; but to the impenitent he will be the great and dreadful God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. This good yet awful God demands your heart; shall he have it? The Lord Jesus, that eternal Word, who was with God, and was God, and who appeared as God manifest in the flesh, claims your love. He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He is the author of eternal salvation, Heb. v. 9. Ere long the wealth of a world com-

pared with his favour, will be as insignificant as an atom weighed against the universe. His love would for ever enrich you, his frown for ever undo you. All the good that an undone, yet immortal being can need, he is ready to bestow upon you. Will you receive him as your Lord and Saviour? Will you be his devoted disciple, and be blessed for ever? Or, will you be a miserable and wicked neglecter of such infinite goodness, and be for ever accursed?

While the Saviour's excellences and love should win your heart, the horrible nature of the wicked one should excite intense abhorrence of his service. Satan is all that is hateful and hellish. In him dwells every evil passion, and every malevolent disposition. God permits him for a time to manifest his hatred to holiness by tempting mankind to wickedness, but hell is the prison originally prepared for the devil and his angels. To that prison of despair he is intent on dragging guilty men. He desires to make them partakers with himself in rebellion and misery; and his infernal malice against God and holiness would exult in their wickedness and destruction. To that place of everlasting burnings, which was prepared for him and his angels, he would allure you, and would have you serve him here, that he may torment you for ever there. Compared with him lions and tigers are mild destroyers; yet he and his rebel associates are the "rulers of the darkness of this world," Eph. vi. 12. These rulers you must serve unless you yield yourself to God.

O could you see the glory of God, could you view the Son of God as he appears in heaven, and behold him blessing with unfading life and joy the myriads of the saved, would you not take his yoke and welcome him as your Lord and your all? And could you see the infernal spirit, black with hellborn dispositions, hateful and direful as his flaming prison, would you not almost die with horror at the thought of belonging to such a ruler? "Merciful God," you might exclaim, "save me from this horrible enemy! Have I served him through all my careless years, and been doing his will in all my neglect of thee? Miserable wretch, to spend my all in the service of so cruel and dreadful a foe, whilst thou wast inviting me to become thy child and a follower of thy Son." O reader, will you be a disciple of that adorable and compassionate Saviour?

Consider the certain and solemn consequences, so far as

you are individually concerned, of regarding the advice here given you, and of receiving the Lord Jesus as your God and Saviour; or of trifling with these admonitions, and neglecting the great salvation. Think what will be these results as to the life you will lead in this world.

If you become a disciple of the Lord Jesus, you will follow him. You will copy his example, you will obey his precepts and love his word. The Saviour will be your hope and joy, and more precious than worlds of gold. You will love him in sincerity, and will prize as your richest treasure an interest in his favour. You will seek his kingdom, and not deem life itself dear, so that you may finish your course with joy. Your chief concern on earth will be to live to your Redeemer, and safely to reach your heavenly home.

If you become not Christ's disciple, you will continue a servant of the wicked one, and your life will be the reverse of all that has now been described. You will live under the hardening power of sin. Perhaps you may be a profligate, but if not a profligate, yet a trifler with everlasting good, or at the utmost but almost a Christian. In the midst of Christian knowledge and privileges you will live, adding every day to the number of your sins and increasing the already weighty load of your transgressions. Every prayer you hear, every privilege you slight, every mercy you abuse, every tear that is shed for you, every warning that is addressed to you, and every day you live, will aggravate your guilt, and increase your future condemnation.

O reader, in which of these states will you pass through the world? You must in one: which do you choose?

Survey the blessings which await you, while living, and when dying, if you yield yourself to Christ.

If your all be committed to his hands, of what love will you be the happy object! What good will you possess! What gracious care and support will attend you! What victory over sin, death, and hell will crown you! What peaceful mansions will ere long receive you!

If you become his disciple, his atoning death will blot out all your sins. You will have peace with God through the blood of his Son, and will be exposed to no condemnation. In the Lord Jesus you will stand accepted and complete. He will be your Saviour, and the Lord your righteousness, your Shepherd, and your Advocate. You will possess the blessing secured by that amazing grace which "made him

to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. v. 21. The grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost will be your blissful portion.

This good would be to you, not only a source of future happiness, but of present peace and joy. In your own breast you would have a perpetual spring of comfort. Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. This you would experience to be a delightful truth. No situation would be destitute of comfort. If looking back and surveying the way in which the Lord your God had led you, you would review with pleasure mercies passed, and bless him on account of sins forgiven. If looking forwards, you would see the blissful prospects of eternity ; if upwards, a heavenly home ; if downwards to the appalling grave, yet the grave would appear but a dark passage to the realms of eternal day. Amidst the vicissitudes of life, its sorrows and its trials, still you would enjoy the sweet assurance, "My all is not laid here." Let the worldling tell you of his treasures, his gold, his jewels, his parks, his mansions, you would exult in better possessions. You would say, God is mine. The adorable Jehovah is my Father. The eternal Spirit is my Sanctifier and Comforter. The Saviour of the lost is my Saviour, my atonement, and my all. His love cheers me, and his strength supports me. The covenant of his grace is mine, and every promise made to his flock, is made to me. You could exclaim, "Man of the world, boast of your wealth and your vanities, 'for this is all your store ;' I have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. All you have will shortly leave you, like autumnal leaves falling from the tree they once adorned ; but my treasures will not make to themselves wings and flee away. In health or sickness they are mine. In pain or ease they diffuse serenity through my soul. In life or death they are my solace and my stay. Angels are my 'elder brethren' in the skies, and soon shall I mingle with them, and in heavenly perfection adore their Lord and mine. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? 'I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able

to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,' " Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Thus devotedness to the Divine Saviour would open to you an unfailing fountain of delight, and would render you safe and blest whatever might befall you. The blessedness of being ready to meet the Lord, and all the safety and peace of so happy a state would be yours. Let death come when or how it might, all would be well. While on earth you would live to God; and when called hence, would go to live with him. Many have manifested the holy serenity of spirit that such hopes inspire. A servant of God as life declined, said, "I would be waiting to see what God will do with me. It is good to say, as Mr. Baxter, What, when, and where God pleases.—If God has no more service for me to do, through grace I am ready. It is a great mercy to me that I have no manner of fear or dread of death. I could, if God please, lay my head back and die without terror this afternoon or night. My chief supports are from my views of eternal things, and the interest I have in them. I trust all my sins are pardoned through the blood of Christ. I have no fear of dying; it would be my greatest comfort to lie down and sleep, and wake no more."*

Follow Jesus, and such peace may be yours. Follow him, and numerous blessings will certainly crown the solemn hour of your departure hence. Die you must, but death would not harm you. Should death come leisurely, you might perceive its approach, and know that soon the throbbing heart must cease to beat, but you would feel no confusion, no alarm. Your sins would be forgiven, your soul would be committed to Christ; the work of life be done, and your "only business would be to die." Should death come suddenly, you would be ready for the unexpected summons. Sudden death would be sudden glory. You would avoid the pain and the distress that are frequently connected with dying, and die almost without perceiving death. One minute you would be in health, the next in heaven. Should death approach in age, you could bless the grace that had supported you under the burden and heat of life's momentous day, and calmly lean your fainting head upon the Saviour's arm and peacefully expire. Should death remove you hence in youth, you would still be ready to depart. You would go

but the more speedily to bliss, and reap the harvest of an earlier victory. Every state would be blest to you, because you were blest in Christ. Let it but be said you are Christ's, and it must be added, and all is well. If you live, it is well; if you die, it is better. If you reach age, it is well; If you die young, it is well. If you are poor, sick, and afflicted, union to Christ renders trials blessings, and all is well. If you are prosperous, his blessing sanctifies prosperity, and all is well. When his grace is enjoyed, all is well for time, and all is well for eternity.

Now take an opposite view, and think of the evils that will overwhelm you while living, and when dying, if you receive not the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

If you pursue a course of carelessness or more open sin, then on you will press a load of guilt, of vile rebellion, and dark ingratitude against God. You will have no part in the blessings purchased by the Saviour's death. The curse of the broken law, with the anathema of the neglected gospel, will rest upon your soul. You will be unready for death, for judgment, and for eternal life; but as the fuel is ready for the fire, so will you be ready for everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

O reader, these are truths of infinite solemnity. Have mercy on yourself, God offers mercy to you. Let it not be said that God is willing to save you, and you unwilling to seek his mercy, that the Saviour is willing to welcome you, and you unwilling to devote yourself and commit your soul to him. How hateful in the view of every holy being must they be that in effect, if not in profession, prefer sin to holiness, hell to heaven, and Satan to God!

If you receive not the Saviour, as you will be destitute of all spiritual blessings, you must also be a stranger to all the elevating pleasures of religion.

You will have no delightful anticipations of eternal life, no cheering views of God as your Father and your friend; no sweet confidence in the Saviour as your Saviour, and your all. When conscience accuses, where can you flee for refuge? You cannot plead that the blood of Christ has washed away your sins. When death threatens you, what can you find to destroy its sting and to disperse the terrors of the grave? Upward you might look, but heaven is not yours. Backward there are loads of unforgiven guilt. Forward,

there is an eternity for the solemnities of which you are unprepared. Downward, there is the pit of woe into which you must plunge when all the pursuits and pleasures of this transient world shall have vanished like a dream. Do you forget all these solemn subjects? You are then going blind-fold to perdition, and when you plunge into the unseen but burning lake what will be your shrieks of surprise and agony! Do you, on the contrary, think of these things? They fix your soul upon the rack of torture. Should death come to you leisurely, you will be filled with distress and alarm. Should you die suddenly, the unexpected stroke will be sudden perdition. Should your life end in youth, all your pleasures at once depart, and you go to meet an incensed Judge, whose grace you have despised. Should the stroke of death be delayed till age, then laden with the guilt of more numerous sins, you sink into deeper woe than would have been your portion if you had gone in earlier life to hell. Thus while you neglect the Saviour, all is ill with you. Whatever you are, whatever you enjoy, and wherever you are, every beating pulse, every flying moment, hastens you nearer to the dreadful judgment, to everlasting burnings, and to the hopelessness of final despair.

And justly so, for an ungodly life will prove an "earthly sensual, devilish" life. An American Indian who belonged to the methodist society, on one occasion, when fatigued and hungry, sought for a Christian brother, from whom he might obtain relief. Not meeting with a methodist, he entered the house of another man, and inquired, "What kind of religion have you got?" The man, in character like millions, answered, "No religion." The Indian, as surprised, said "What! no religion?" "Yes, no religion," rejoined the stranger. The Indian looked sorry, and withdrawing, exclaimed, "Then you be just like my dog; he no religion neither." True, alas! is the Indian's assertion. If you live without religion, you debase yourself as low as the brute that perishes. But this is not all the truth, you sink yourself lower than the brutes. Colonel Gardiner, while a stranger to the grace of God, and living in worldly pleasures, seeing a dog enter the room, groaning inwardly, said, "O that I were that dog." If you live without religion, happy would you be if you were like the Indian's dog. That dog had no soul to lose, no Saviour to slight, no God to insult, no spiritual privileges to abuse, no hell to shun, no heaven

to secure. But you have a soul to save, a Saviour to obtain, a God to serve, a hell to escape, and a heaven to seek. All this claims your attention, and all this, while you are not Christ's disciple, you wickedly neglect. So long as this is your conduct, consider that the Indian's sharp rebuke applies to you ; " You are just like my dog, he has no religion neither." Oh useless, worse than useless life ; oh profitless, worse than profitless existence, which is spent without God in the world. Oh wretched they that, sinking lower than the brutes, resemble in their conduct and character demons themselves. Those infernal spirits love not Christ, they love not holiness, they love not God ; they serve their hateful king. Do you not love God ? do you not love Christ ? do you not love holiness ? do you serve Satan in a life of carelessness, or more open sin ? Oh dreadful resemblance that exists between your character and spirit, and those of the devil and his angels !

Perhaps, reader, these plain truths offend you, yet bear with the plainness when your eternal interests are at stake. If you hide from your own view the horrid deformity, the aggravated guilt of an irreligious life, you cannot hide it from the sight of God, nor long conceal it from your own. It is a fact, a dreadful fact, that every irreligious person is a rebel against God. It is equally a fact, that rebellion against God makes Satan what he is, and that neglect of God and rebellion against him, makes fallen man bear a shocking resemblance to the devil and his angels. Would you bear such a character ? if not, fly to the Saviour, and yield him your heart and your all.

Think of the certain issue of a religious or irreligious life as to your eternal state.

Wide now is the contrast between the devoted disciples of the Lord Jesus, and the followers of the world, as to their character and course, their state and their prospects ; but soon this wide difference will appear infinitely wider.

As you have been reminded, you must die. If you receive the Lord Jesus, and live to him, the mansions in his Father's house will be your home. Look forward to that happy, happy home. Behold that better country, where the days of mourning are ended. Behold that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. See that crown of life which would recompense the toils and conflicts of a thousand centuries. Look at those happy conquerors that

wear the white robes of victory, and wave the palms of triumph, Rev. vii. These, if you follow Jesus, are your future companions. Harken to the anthems of the blest. Listen to their hymns of victory and praise to the Author of salvation. Those hymns you will sing ere long, if the Saviour be yours. Have you welcomed him? If you have, now many of your treasures are in reversion, but soon all will be in possession. Now, perhaps, you are poor and afflicted; or perhaps your form marred with disease, and your bloom faded by illness. You now deplore defects, and struggle with inward and outward foes. Ere long all this will have passed away, you will exchange mortal weakness for immortal vigour. You will shine arrayed in the youth and beauty, the bloom and glory, the holiness and loveliness of heaven. And all which eye hath not seen, which ear hath not heard, and which hath not entered the heart of man, will become your eternal inheritance. Happy issue to the struggles of a few short years in the great Redeemer's service! How boundless the grace which freely gives such blessedness where, after every service and every struggle, nothing has been merited! How richly would this compensate you for all the cares and anxieties your soul can ever know! Would you not watch an hour to enrich a life, and will you not through life's brief day, watchfully seek from the Saviour that good which will bless all eternity?

Have the solemn truths urged on your attention, engaged your heart for God, or has all been urged in vain? If it be so, if you will not come to Christ that you may have life, then think of your future lot. The dream of life will soon pass away. Your last year will arrive, your last month, your last week, your last day, your last hour, your last minute comes and departs, and next is eternity. On that state you enter. Your spirit is fixed in the unseen world; all around you is eternal, but it is eternal ruin. "In vain to heaven you lift your eyes." There is no heaven for you; you find your place is hell. How changed is now your state and character! Here you have partial good, but no good is there. Here perhaps you have health and prosperity, and are esteemed amiable though not pious; there you must be for ever hateful, and for ever wretched. Here, though a rebel against your God, some kind dispositions towards your fellow men dwell in you, but there you will for ever wear Satan's horrid likeness. Every hateful passion will

rankle in your breast, every evil disposition will glare from your eye, and all the agonies of remorse and despair will torment your distracted spirit. How awful is such a difference from that in which mercy waits upon you! How much more awful this difference from what you might be, and from what you would be, if you renounced the world and welcomed Christ! There will be scoffers and infidels and the most hateful of mankind: but, alas! there too will be multitudes who incurred ruin by neglecting the holy Saviour. And will you be one among them?

Should this be your lot, with what unutterable remorse will you remember invitations to the Saviour, often repeated but finally disregarded! What agonizing reflections will you endure for having heard in vain the gospel of salvation! What would be the reflections of a man dying for thirst, if he had long sat by a copious fountain, and were now dying for want of the stream of which he had neglected to partake? What would be the remorse of a criminal at the gallows, if he had to remember that for months pardon had been proffered to him, but been slighted by him. But what will be your remorse if in eternity memory perpetually reminds you, that for years you heard of heaven, and slighted its happiness; of hell, and rushed into its flames; of salvation, and neglected its blessings; of Jesus' love, and trifled with all his claims! What will be the tormenting reflection that you mingled with the prayerful, yet did not pray, that you sung of heaven while hastening to hell, and of mercy, while slighting mercy, and incurring vengeance! What an aggravation will it be of your guilt, that you sinned not amidst heathen darkness, but in the blaze of gospel light. What bitterness will it add to your woe to think—Once there was no impassable gulf between happiness and me, though now for ever separated. Perhaps you will have to recollect times when you were almost decided to follow Christ, when there seemed but a step between you and salvation. "O that I had yielded then! that I had cherished those impressions which led me almost to the Saviour's feet! O that I had yielded when he called, and complied when he invited! O that I had gone that one step further, and become his devoted disciple! O that I had not listened to the voice of pleasure, to the seductions of companions, to the temptations to delay, that kept me fast in Satan's snares. Alas, now all is over. Regret is vain, the day of

salvation is passed, tears are vain, remorse is vain ; God called, but I refused ; the Bible foretold my doom, but I was deaf to its warnings ; Christians foresaw my destruction, but I heeded not their counsels ; the horrible night has overtaken me, and guilt and hell are mine for ever.

Thus, reader, good and evil, blessing and cursing are set before you. If you devoutly embrace religion, and yield yourself to God, your life, through his Divine grace, will be holy and useful, your character honourable, your death you have every reason to believe will be peaceful, and your eternal state glorious and happy. If you trifle with the Saviour and religion, your life will be sinful, your character will be wicked, your death will be dreadful, and your eternal state perdition. The alternatives of liberty or slavery, ease or pain, health or sickness, plenty or want, life or death are utter trifles compared with the alternative before you.

As life everlasting and death eternal are before you, take one more view of the awful alternative presented to you ; and think what God, and Christ, and angels, and heaven, and hell, and Satan, and the gospel, and eternity will surely be to you, according as you gain an interest in the Lord Jesus, or neglect his heavenly grace.

If, under the eternal Spirit's influence, you yield yourself to the Saviour, what will God be to you ?—your Friend, your Father, the joy of your heart, the support of feeble or dying nature, and your portion for ever. If you yield not yourself to the Lord Jesus, what must God be to you ?—an awful avenger, a dreadful God, a consuming fire, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall.

Yield yourself to Christ, and what will he be to you ?—a compassionate Saviour, a kind Shepherd, a prevailing Advocate, a Forerunner gone to provide for you in heaven, whose blood will blot out all your guilt, whose care will ever protect your soul, whose love will crown you with eternal life. Yield not, and what will Christ be to you ?—a dreadful Judge, whose frown will wither your guilty soul, and sink you in uttermost despair. What will his blood be to you ? A dying neglector has answered, "The sorest torment I shall have in hell." All he has done will avail you nothing as to salvation, but all will render your sin more inexcusable, and your ruin more intolerable.

Yield, and what will angels be to you ?—ministering spirits of mercy ; elder brethren in the skies, and your

future companions in the realms of light. Yield not and what will they be to you?—blessed beings, who must look with abhorrence on your wicked neglect; among whose shining ranks you will never mingle; and who will never welcome you to their friendship and their home.

Yield yourself to the Saviour, and what will heaven be to you?—your happy home, your future dwelling, your unfading and blissful inheritance. Yield not, and what will it be to you?—a happy country that you will never enter; a favoured abode of holiness, joy, and triumph, whose holiness you will never experience, whose joys you will never share; whose songs of victory you will never sing; in whose blissful praises you will never unite, and in whose gladsome triumph you will never participate.

Yield yourself to the Saviour, and what will hell be to you?—a prison of despair that you will never enter, whose gloom will never sadden your spirit, whose wailings, and tossings, and cursing, and agony, will never excite in your soul one moment's pain; but the recollection of deliverance from whose direful scenes will animate the praises of your soul, and add new fervour to the gratitude of heaven. Yield not, and what will hell be to you?—your dismal dungeon, your dreary prison; the place of your weeping, and wailing, and torment, and woe: the place where you will long for mercy, when mercy can never be found; the place where you will curse your God, but not curse God and die; where you will yet live to curse him still, and curse your being, and curse your companions in guilt, and never laugh, but ever sigh; and never rejoice, but ever mourn; and never hope, but ever despair.

Yield yourself to the Lord Jesus, and what will Satan be to you?—a vanquished foe, a conquered enemy, whose malice and temptations will not injure you, but only render more bright that faith, patience and love, which enable you to trample on him and all his adherents. Yield not, and what will he be to you?—a tempter and ruler through the short journey of life, leading you captive at his will; and a horrid tormentor when he has accomplished all his designs respecting you, and drawn you down to his own fiery prison.

Yield yourself to the Lord Jesus, and what will the gospel be to you?—a savour of life unto life; the means of happiness and holiness; glad tidings of great joy, and the

spring of good so vast, that eternity itself will hardly seem long enough to utter all the praise you owe its gracious Author. Yield not, and what will the gospel be to you?—the savour of death unto death, the cause of heavier condemnation, and the means, because you slight its blessings, of sinking you deeper in the flames of hell.

Finally, receive the Lord Jesus, yield yourself to him, and what will eternity be to you?—one unending scene of peace, and holiness, and joy, and rapture; where joy upon joy, blessing upon blessing, rapture upon rapture, triumph upon triumph, in infinite succession, will form one unbroken, everlasting prospect; where holiness will be without imperfection, health without sickness, happiness without sorrow, love without coldness, and life without death, for ever and ever, for ever and ever.

Yield not, and what will eternity be to you?—one sad scene of blackness, and darkness, and gloom, and anguish; where sorrows will crowd upon sorrows, and waves of woe unceasingly follow each other in infinite succession, where years, ages, centuries, would dwindle into nothingness, while sin and misery will feel no alleviation, and hope for no end,

Having taken these views of the importance and necessity of religion, now answer the question, Will you be a disciple of the Saviour?

What, and whose will you henceforth be? Surely you dare not say, "I will not commit my soul to the Saviour, I will not yield myself to him. I will serve Satan, sin, and death, and will have my portion with the damned." You would not utter so horrid a declaration; but if you come not to Christ, this will be the issue of your course. Perhaps you delay: you hope to yield yourself to the Saviour hereafter, and so neglect to receive him now. Delay is Satan's grand snare for preventing the escape of his miserable victims. Many delay turning to God who would not decidedly refuse, but delay hardens their hearts, multiplies their sins, and seals their condemnation.

Delay, in such a case, is wicked ingratitude to God and the Saviour. He claims all you have, and all you are; and had you ten thousand hearts, and ten thousand lives, his love to you would deserve the offering of them all! How base therefore is it to desire to offer Him as little as possible; and to spend your most precious time in adding sin to sin, and ingratitude to ingratitude.

Delay is loss to yourself. You lose all the blessings of the Saviour's favour. Delay keeps you in constant anger, you are never safe. You lie condemned and perishing. If an enemy were threatening your destruction, would you delay to flee to an offered refuge? If you were condemned to die, would you delay to accept a pardon that might save you from ignominy and death? O reader, the salvation proffered you in the gospel is infinitely more momentous than protection from a murderer's weapon, or an executioner's bloody hands. The danger you are in till you possess this salvation, is infinitely more dreadful than any danger besides that can possibly be imagined. Your danger is the danger of being "cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched," Mark ix. 45.

Perhaps you have no earthly friends to encourage and assist you in the way to heaven. But if no friend, no relative will go with you in the path of peace, is it not your interest to secure eternal life, and to travel to heaven alone rather than to perish in their company? Perhaps, on the other hand, you have pious friends,—shall they only be pious? Shall God be their Father, and Satan yours? Heaven their home, and hell yours?

Once more, be entreated to consider that life and death are before you. It comes to this—You must be Christ's disciple, and be saved; or not be his, and be damned. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. You must be Christ's, and soon wear his likeness, and enjoy his favour in heaven; or not be his, and ere long wail in hell, and there be like a devil in character and woe. This awful, this fearful alternative, is before you. One or the other of the two courses described in this tract you must pursue. A middle way you cannot discover. If the Lord Jesus is not your Lord and Saviour, the devil, that lord of drunkards, swearers, murderers, and atheists, is your ruler also. Decide therefore, as in God's sight decide. Whose will you be? Shall Christ or the world have your heart? Will you have God for your Father, or the devil for your ruler? Shall your life be blessed or cursed? Shall your death be peaceful or despairing? Will you have salvation or damnation? One you must

have ; which shall it be ? Shall heaven or hell receive your soul ? Shall your eternal home be mansions in light, or the prison of the lost ? One you must inherit ; which do you choose ? Shall angels or accursed spirits be your future companions ? With the former or the latter you must mingle ; which shall it be ? Shall your future employment be praise and rejoicing, or blasphemy and wailing ? One or the other it must be ; which will you choose ? When others walk over your grave, will you be where death can never enter, or where death is coveted, but never found ? In one of those opposite states you must exist : which shall it be ? O decide ! decide ! Answer, as in the view of death, judgment, and eternal scenes, the solemn question, Will you also be the Saviour's disciple ? Choose now, and choose as for eternity. The solemn alternative is before you—you cannot evade it ; you cannot change it ; you may forget, but cannot set it aside. Religion, Christ, and heaven ; irreligion, Satan, and hell. Choose which you will, but one you must.

Is it the determination of your soul to follow Christ, and seek his great salvation ? Go then in prayer to him, and thus draw down the grace to be the Lord's. Your own resolutions will otherwise be like the morning cloud, or the early dew that soon pass away. Ask, and you shall receive. Ask God for his Holy Spirit's influence, while you flee to his crucified Son. Attend to this, and you are blest ; neglect this, and you are lost.

God of heaven ! Father of mercies ! without whom wisdom is not wise, nor strength strong, exert thy influence on the reader's heart. The seed is sown, but "neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but thou that givest the increase. Give that increase, and thine through everlasting years shall be the honour, and glory, and praise."

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